Wallow and Willow

An excerpt from the "Garden of Intuition" series

By

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For the first six months, Sephie lolled around the farm like a wilted flower. She thought of herself this way often, as a wilted flower, and in fact, took no small amount of pleasure from thinking it.

"Oh whoa is me," she would imagine herself saying, pressing the back of her hand to her forehead in a lament to the sky: "I am but a wilted flower, plucked to soon so that I might never blossom."

Sephie knew, obviously, that her situation wasn't nearly so bad, but she enjoyed greatly the attention garnered by behaving as if it were.

Sandra had seen to Sephie's every comfort, she had her own room in the big mansion on the hill. In the bedroom was a gigantic downy bed, with a pair of comforters that Sephie liked to snuggle in, and even when if was far to warm for snuggling. Apart from the stark décor of the room that Sandra had given her, Sephie liked it very much. It certainly wasn't her style, but Sephie was at the farm exactly to reevaluate things like "her style" anyway. The white lace of most of the linens appealed to her; she thought of the white décor as a blank canvas on which she would rebuild her life.

Something had been nagging at her to begin again lately. For the first several weeks after coming to the farm, Sephie was obviously too ill to think about such things, but after having spent a good amount of time on the farm and getting to know and trust herself and her surroundings, Sephie was beginning to feel good again.

Something about the mansion, and indeed most of the farm felt good to Sephie, and so comfortable—it wasn't that she felt like she'd been in this place before, but rather than the place was like a home that Sephie had never known.

Indeed, on the few occasions that Sephie came across her benefactor, she'd felt almost matronly toward her, and not really known why. It was as if she'd known Sandra her whole life, or at least, she wished she'd known her whole life.

Sandra seemed to be too busy to spend any time with Sephie after she was first brought under her care, and while Sephie mulled around the house for that first six months, she could go weeks at a time without coming cross her benefactor.

It often astonished Sephie that Sandra could be so hard to find; it wasn't as if the mansion on the hill was particularly large, (it was, however, the biggest structure on the farm, outside of the

machinery sheds), and in fact, the farm wasn't big. A person could walk across the entire farm in only about an hour and a half.

But, while the mansion wasn't, the farm was big enough to get lost in, so when Sephie wasn't making a show of moping around the house, she would often sneak off and find some of the farm's hidden treasures.

One such treasure was the small grove of Willow trees that grew down the path from the mansion, at the crook in Old Willow Creek and past the dusty area where the itinerant worker's children would play in the their strange kicking game, similar to soccer, but somehow different.

A majestic and ancient tree had grown immediately to the west of a crook in Old Willow Creek, and it was hard to say which creature had seniority, the brook or the tree. Both seemed to have an unspoken respect for the other.

The Willow had grown significantly knotty in its age and each knot was a convenient place for a hand or a foot to plant for climbing. The tree was notorious, however, for tossing disrespectful children into the brook, and those that climbed with defiance, would find themselves, if not thoroughly drenched at the least, on their way to the emergency room.

The tree's disposition was well known to many of the residents of the farm. Most of the itinerant children knew about the tree, and even those that weren't forbidden to go to the willow grove stayed away anyway.

Sephie knew, of course, none of this, on that early spring morning that she found her way into to grove.

The Willow bowed to her as she entered. As she approached the big tree, drawn to it she knew not why, the brook hushed it's babbling. A passing fawn averted his eyes, and indeed the

overcast sky parted and beams of light sprinkled through the old willow's leaves as Sephie touched it for the first time.

"I beg your pardon, sir willow," she said approaching the tree. "Aren't you a big sweet thing?" Sephie said quietly, inspecting the first knot on the trunk. It had been years since she climbed a tree, and certainly no shoes and the white sleeping gown that Sandy had given her weren't proper garb for tree climbing, but the tree inspired her. "You've got toughness about you, old willow," she spoke softly, "but I can see you're a good old man. You're the guardian of this place, aren't you?" she said.

She felt a bit silly talking out loud like this, but she couldn't help herself, motivated by the tree perhaps, or some not-understood feeling in her heart. She knew that she and the tree and been together in the past. An unspoken comfort was shared between Sephie and the tree.

Sephie hoisted herself up, and the tree held down its great branch and lifted her up onto the crooked seat over the brook. Sephie straightened her nightshirt and leaned back onto the some other branches crossing near to the great crooked branch.

Sephie realized that she was quiet sleepy, and even though it was only mid morning, she decided that, in the care of the old willow tree, she would allow herself to be lolled off to sleep, leaning back on the branch, and resting her feet on the top of another.

The tree swayed Sephie softly as it brought its great hanging branches down around her, enveloping her in a curtain of his strands, and protecting her from the cool spring breezes.

It was the first peaceful sleep that Sephie had had in many months, perhaps since she'd first come to the farm.

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